

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Karen Terrill
CDF Information Officer
(916) 653-5123

**RELEASE
DATE:**

May 7, 2001

Arson Awareness Week CDF Reaches Out to the Public for Help

Sacramento- The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) joins the national fire service in declaring the week of May 6-12, 2001 as Arson Awareness Week. The CDF asks that all citizens of California to do their part to assist in the arrest and prosecution of arsonists.

"We consider arson a heinous crime," said John Tennant CDF State Fire Marshal. "Arson terrorizes people, destroys property and damages natural resources for years to come."

CDF reports the following noteworthy statistics to underscore the seriousness of the arson problem:

- Every year, one out of 10 wildfires in California is of suspicious origin.
- The acreage burned, and dollar damage done by these fires are more than that from lightning, playing with fire, railroad, electrical, campfire and smoking fires combined.
- The damage done by arson fires is usually disproportionate to their numbers. In one recent year, only 10% of the fires were caused by arson, but they inflicted 70% of the dollar damage to property.
- Last year 489 confirmed arson fires in California's wildlands burned 15,394 acres.
- On average, CDF makes 90 arson arrests per year. The conviction rate is consistently greater than 90%. Much of the credit for the high conviction rate is attributed to the assistance of the public, often because eyewitnesses place the offender at the scene of the fire when it starts.

CDF asks the public to help in the following ways:

- ✓ If you see a suspicious person in an area where a wildfire has started, make note of their description, including their clothing.
- ✓ Note the description of their vehicle, especially the license plate number.
- ✓ Check your watch. We need to place the suspect at the scene at the time the fire starts.
- ✓ Do not try to apprehend the suspect. Report the information to your local fire or law enforcement agency. Or call 1 800 468-4408.

###